In Internet time, it's already an old story, but worth repeating. Senator Marco Rubio, a Florida Tea Party guy, was asked in a GQ interview how old he believes the earth is. His reply:

> I'm not a scientist, man. I can tell you what recorded history says, I can tell you what the Bible says, but I think that's a dispute amongst theologians and I think it has nothing to do with the gross domestic product or economic growth of the United States. I think the age of the universe has zero to do with how our economy is going to grow. I'm not a scientist. I don't think I'm qualified to answer a question like that. At the end of the day, I think there are multiple theories out there on how the universe was created and I think this is a country where people should have the opportunity to teach them all. I think parents should be able to teach their kids what their faith says, what science says. Whether the Earth was created in 7 days, or 7 actual eras, I'm not sure we'll ever be able to answer that. It's one of the great mysteries.

Survey says: ***Bzzt.*** There are many mysteries out there. The age of the earth is not one of them: the ~~radiocarbon~~ radiometric dating is so clear that it cannot be doubted — unless you are a paleo-Christianist (and part of the GOP base).

The Shrill One was not pleased:

> [H]ere's what you should realize: when Rubio says that the question of the Earth's age "has zero to do with how our economy is going to grow", he's dead wrong. For one thing, science and technology education has a lot to do with our future productivity — and how are you going to have effective science education if schools have to give equal time to the views of fundamentalist Christians?
>
> More broadly, the attitude that discounts any amount of evidence — and boy, do we have lots of evidence on the age of the planet! — if it conflicts with prejudices is not an attitude consistent with effective policy. If you're going to ignore what geologists say if you don't like its implications, what are the chances that you'll take sensible advice on monetary and fiscal policy? After all, we've just seen how Republicans deal with research

> reports that undermine their faith in the magic of tax cuts: they try to suppress the reports.

But even Krugman does not go far enough, because the suppression of facts, a general trend that Ethan highlighted in the context of the election, has darker implications. Hannah Arendt has a reminder for us. Speaking of the famous Smolensk Archive, a cache of Stalin-era Soviet government documents captured by Nazi invaders, she observes a striking "lacuna" in them "concerning statistical data:"

> [A]ll facts that did not agree, or were likely to disagree, with the official fiction — data on crop-yields, criminality, true incidences of 'counter-revolutionary' activities as distinguished from the later conspiracy fictions — were treated as non-facts. It was indeed quite in line with the totalitarian contempt for facts and reality that all such data, instead of being collected in Moscow from the four corners of the immense territory, were first made known to the respective localities through publication in ***Pravda, Izvestia,*** or some other official organ in Moscow, so that every region and every district of the Soviet Union received its official, fictitious statistical data in much the same way it received the no less fictitious norms allotted to them by the Five Year Plans. ***(Origins of Totalitarianism, 3rd ed. 1966, p. 367).***

No — the current Republican Party is not totalitarian. But in this sense at least, it is following a totalitarian trope. It's one of several. Arendt also observes that totalitarianism is constantly changing its core beliefs, leaving its supporters with nothing else but to Follow The Leader. So too with Republicans. The Affordable Care Act was hatched in the Heritage Foundation. Cap-and-trade was also originally a conservative idea. Ronald Reagan was adamant in his resistance to torture, and also insisted that Social Security played no role in the deficit. Conservatives in good standing could believe all these things — until the Party told them that doing so was capitulating to socialism. Soviet regions and districts were told what to believe in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*: Movement Conservatives are told what to believe from Fox News and the Rush Limbaugh Show.

At some point, we are going to need a better theoretical analysis of the peculiar

nature of what passes for modern thought within Movement Conservatism (as opposed to genuine conservatism, which is now mostly represented within the Democratic Party). It's *not* totalitarian — for example, the GOP has no charismatic leader that defines it, and (so far) has avoided paramilitary formations — but seems to grab a bunch of things from totalitarianianism, most obviously a world view that completely shuts out inconvenient facts. What would you call it? Totalism? Truman Show-ism? Wordsmiths better get on it. In the meantime, the rest of us need to think about how to make sure the public knows just how maniacal Movement Conservatism has become.